

## RINGING AND MIGRATION AT NGULIA, TSAVO, AUTUMN 1983

G.C. Backhurst and D.J. Pearson

The Lodge was manned for a total of only 14 nights between 3 November and 11 December, but netting at night was possible on only seven, while daytime netting was attempted on two more days. This was the lowest level of activity at Ngulia since night-netting started in November 1974. Moreover, the total of 2769 Palaearctic migrants ringed was the lowest since the 1973/74 season. On the positive side, the daily total of 900 ringed on 7 December was the highest ever, apart from the particularly productive 1979/80 season (when this figure was exceeded on no less than seven dates).

The first visit, of four nights from 3 to 8 November, produced no birds at all: nights were either totally clear or with high cloud. Tsavo had had a little early rain before this visit but generally the park was dry.

The December visit, from 2nd to 11th, provided the only ringing activity of the season; four nights were all clear with very few or no birds, while the remaining six nights were misty with appreciable falls of migrants. Palaearctic birds ringed - and their scientific names - are given in Table 1. The second column shows the individual species totals expressed as a percentage of the mean for the previous eleven years. As would be expected, this year's means are all low, although (of the four major Ngulia species) the Sprosser and River Warbler figures make a reasonable showing.

As noted in other years (see, for example, *Scopus* 3: 19-25), the variation in catch composition often varies substantially from night to night. This is

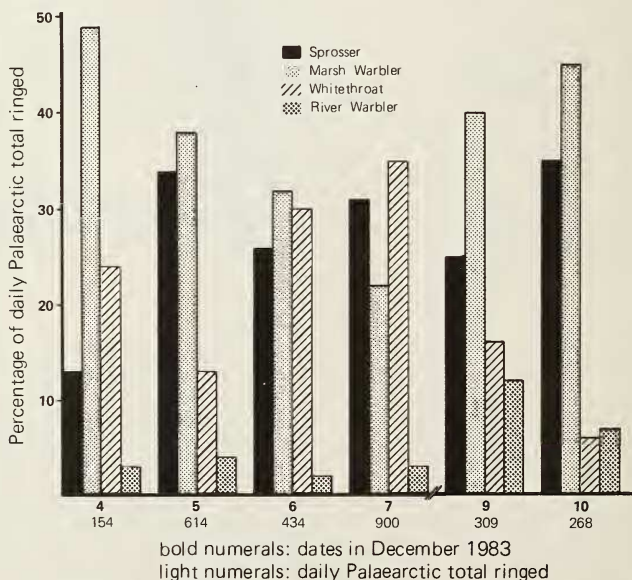


Fig. 1. Comparison of the daily catch, as percentages, of the four main Palaearctic species during December 1983

TABLE 1

Numbers of Palaearctic night migrants ringed at Ngulia Safari Lodge  
between October and February in the years 1969-1984\*

Species	1983/4* total	%**	Total 1969- 1984*
Scops Owl <i>Otus scops</i>	1	-	2
Eurasian Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	3	12	229
Eurasian Roller <i>Coracias garrulus</i>	2	50	36
Eurasian Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i> [caught at night]	2	11	126
Rufous Bush Chat <i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>	6	9	735
Iranian <i>Irania gutturalis</i>	27	25	1226
Sprosser <i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	814	77	12 595
Nightingale <i>L. megarhynchos</i>	19	47	464
Rock Thrush <i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	8	87	100
Isabelline Wheatear <i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	2	33	68
Northern Wheatear <i>O. oenanthe</i>	4	50	92
Pied Wheatear <i>O. pleschanka</i>	2	53	36
Basra Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus griseldis</i>	24	55	509
Marsh Warbler <i>A. palustris</i>	914	49	21 573
Reed Warbler <i>A. scirpaceus</i>	1	19	61
Upcher's Warbler <i>Hippolais languida</i>	17	75	269
Olive-tree Warbler <i>H. olivetorum</i>	3	12	281
Olivaceous Warbler <i>H. pallida</i>	8	28	323
River Warbler <i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	132	63	2447
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	67	63	1233
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	18	47	441
Whitethroat <i>S. communis</i>	657	40	18 648
Barred Warbler <i>S. nisoria</i>	14	34	477
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	1	2	613
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	5	7	754
Red-tailed Shrike <i>L. isabellinus</i>	18	34	615
Number of species	26		26
Total	2769		63 953

\* 1983/84 season - no ringing in January or February 1984

\*\* The autumn 1983 total expressed as a percentage of mean of the years 1972/73 to 1982/83 for each species

Totals of Palaearctic species ringed in previous autumn seasons but not in the 1983/84 one are as follows: Little Bittern *Ixobrychus m. minutus* 4, Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* 1, Corncrake *Crex crex* 7, Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana* 1, Eurasian Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* 2, Lesser Cuckoo *C. poliocephalus* 1, Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* 6, Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* 13, Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* 2, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* 2, Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* 27, Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus* 65, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* 2, Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* 1, Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* 2, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* 48, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* 19, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* 3 and Red-backed x Red-tailed Shrike *Lanius collurio* x *isabellinus* hybrid 8.

From December 1969 a total of 64 167 Palaearctic birds of 44 species has been ringed at Ngulia during southward migration.

shown for six nights this season in Fig. 1. The Whitethroat may be singled out for special mention: overall (1969 to the present), 29 per cent of all birds ringed at Ngulia have been Whitethroats as against the River Warbler's 3.8 per cent contribution; yet on 10 December the Whitethroat was down to less than 6 per cent of the day's catch compared with just over 7 per cent for the River Warbler.

Numbers of Afrotropical birds moving at night were low. Only ten of the commonest species, the Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei*, were caught and ringed yet a single example of the African race *erlangeri* of the Quail *C. coturnix* was found one night sitting on the bar and added to the Ngulia species list.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Warden of Tsavo National Park (West) for permission to ring birds in the park, the management of Ngulia Safari Lodge and African Tours and Hotels Limited for assistance with accommodation and help in other ways.

For assistance during catching and ringing we are most grateful to Daphne Backhurst, Alan and Elizabeth Carles, Miles Coverdale, June Dirks, John Fanshawe, Lincoln Fishpool, Anna Forbes-Watson, John and Jean Marchant, Maggie Pearson and Mary Sinclair. We thank too the East African Natural History Society for financial assistance from its Bird Migration Fund.

G.C. Backhurst, Box 24702, Nairobi and D.J. Pearson, Department of Biochemistry, University of Nairobi, Box 30197, Nairobi

*Scopus* 7: 136-138, June 1984

#### ORNITHOLOGICAL PROJECTS IN EAST AFRICA, 1983

The following list includes all projects known to the Sub-Committee which, a) involved active field work during 1983, and b) were expected to culminate in publication in recognized journals. For professional workers, only their major projects are listed.

Allan, R.G. FAO/UNDP Quelea bird control project, Nairobi. Biology and management of quelea populations.

Angwin, D. see Cunningham-van Someren.

\*Ash, J.S. FAO/UNDP Quelea bird control project, Kampala, Uganda: a) Biology and management of quelea populations, b) with Carswell, M. and Pomeroy, D.E. Atlas of the birds of Uganda.

Backhurst, G.C., Nairobi: a) Eastern African Ringing Scheme, b) with Pearson, D.J., Migration studies at Ngulia, Tsavo National Park (West).

Carswell, M., Kampala, Uganda: a) \*Avifauna of the Kampala area, b) with Ash, J.S. and Pomeroy, D.E., Atlas of the birds of Uganda.

Cunningham-van Someren, G.R., National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi: a) Taxonomic study of the White-starred Forest Robin *Pogonocichla stellata*, b) Nectar and other food items taken by birds, c) Roosting behaviour of birds, d) National Bird Strike Committee of the Directorate of Civil Aviation, e) with Angwin, D., Ecology of the avifauna of Kora National Reserve, Kenya, as part of the National Museums of Kenya and Royal Geographical Society Research Project, f) Conservation status of birds in Kenya for the Red Data Book.